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THE AMERICAN VEDAS.

[It would be impossible, under any circumstances, not to be touched by the subtle flattery of my countrymen in attributing to me the strength and spirit of another writer. Under a constant misgiving as to the acceptableness of my theology, their testimonial of respect comes to me almost as a special providence. While I cannot forget that it is my too kind critics, and not Mr. Arthur Richmond himself,

“ Whose sweet ‘ I will ’ hath made us one,”

I do not think it my duty to forego the advantage which even the suggestion of such an alliance may bring. So long, therefore, as a genial and discriminating press will continue to discover, and especially to “ reveal,” that there are no other generals than Agamemnon, whatever disguise he may assume, Agamemnon ought not to be blamed if he construe it as encouragement in that which cometh upon him daily—the care of all the churches. I trust, also, it will be construed as a warning to all men who may be meditating a theological onset upon these pages, that no little device of signature or trick of style will avail to divert from me the credit of all the sound theology which appears in this REVIEW, and which modesty alone forbids me from saying I feel amply able to furnish!

An over-anxious observer permits himself to be agitated as to the possible “ consequences of this revelation.” Heaven alone knows. But it will be a most mortifying consequence to me if curiosity about the things I do not write should absorb attention to the exclusion of interest in the things I do write.]

THE New Departure theologians, and not the conservative orthodox, are the spiritual descendants of the iron-bound-creed-makers of old Andover. It is over the iron-bound Andover Creed that flags are flying, bombs bursting, cannon roaring, hot shot pouring. Conservatives declare that new orthodoxy, while not decrying, is practically defying, the creed, but, on the contrary, this is exactly what conservatism is doing. The very word which the creed uses is made by the conservatives a watchword of battle. The very word on which the New Departure men stand as their justification, as, indeed, their word of command, is a word of the iron-bound creed welded by the Andover founders.

They required of their professors a belief in “the Word of God . . . contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.” This the New Departure theologians accept, declare, expound; but the conservatives protest that this will never do;

that it is not enough to say that the Bible *contains* the word of God ; that in order to be really orthodox, to be wholly in unison with the founders, we must believe the Bible to be in every part and parcel the word of God—a unit, a solid, from which no splinter, no moss, can be detached without throwing the whole block away. It is one of the marvels of metaphysics that Professor Phelps and Professor Park, and the Andover complainants, and the clear sighted, common-sense theology of the West, can adopt this position in full view of the creed, which declares the word of God *contained* in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

So far as Andover is concerned, the whole question is decided when this position is seen to be historically false. But truth is to be served by showing that it is also irrational. The consequences of a true theory of the Bible do not diminish the stress of truth, but there are no consequences to be feared. Professor Phelps apprehends that if the Bible only contains the word of God, and is not itself in every part and parcel the word of God, the inevitable sequence will be “that the major part of the Old Testament, to-day, and to us, has no more moral authority than the Vedas. Whether it has as much, what means has the unlettered mind of knowing ?”

It has, at least, the means of reading the Vedas, and comparing them with the Scriptures. But the unlettered mind cannot read the Vedas. Yes, and therein lies the gist of the argument. The Vedas have never had sufficient moral impulsion to get themselves translated for us, and transported to us, and transplanted in us. We know practically, religiously, nothing whatever about the Vedas. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament we do know about. From being the sacred books of a barbarous tribe, of an insignificant province, of a scattered and homeless race, they have insinuated themselves into the very heart and life of the widest and highest nineteenth century civilization, the most powerful civilization in the history of humanity. All the churches of Christendom are founded on them. All the politics of Christendom are amenable to them. The unlettered mind knows nothing about the Vedas, and it knows more about the Bible than about any other book in the world. It knows that the Bible has more moral authority than the Vedas, because it feels and recognizes the authority of the Bible, and does not know the Vedas.

That loosening of the moral authority of the major part of the Old Testament to-day, and to us, which is foreboded as the result of not considering every part and parcel of the Bible to be the Word of God, is a loosening which has already occurred even under the theory that the Bible is a solid, a unit. The Andover professors and the Princeton professors, orthodox or heretic, no more observe the Levitical law than if it were inculcated in the Vedas. Why is it more dangerous to say that the Levitical law has no authority for us, than it is for us to pay no regard to it? Why is it more heretical to say that a law is obsolete, than it is constantly to violate it? The most conservative and orthodox portion of the religious world has done precisely what it is striving to prevent the advancing regiment of the religious army from doing to-day; it has rightly divided the Word of God. Reverently and devoutly studying the Scriptures, it has decided and taught that what was imperative and elevating for the Jews is inappropriate and retrogressive for us. It takes this unit, this solid, this Bible, every word the Word of God, and it says of one part: This is the ceremonial law, and we need not observe it; and of another part: This is moral law, and it is binding on us. By what right, on whose authority, does it limit one word of God to the Jews of Palestine, and spread another word of God over all the world? By right of its own reason. But no pretensions of heterodoxy or heresy can be more radical than this. Unless Professor Phelps worships God with a candlestick of pure gold, six branches coming out of the sides of it, three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side; three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch, and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower; four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers, a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick, their knops and their branches of the same, all of it one beaten work of pure gold, there is a considerable part of the Old Testament which has with him no more moral authority than the Vedas. There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who would bring to any other part of Scripture as devout a heart, as close a scrutiny, as wise a dis-

crimination, as Professor Phelps has brought to the law of the Lord delivered to Moses upon the mount of Sinai.

The Word of God in Genesis says that Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head. The Word of God in Hebrews says Jacob worshiped leaning upon the top of his staff. Alford renders out the *leaning*, and says that Jacob worshiped upon the top of his staff. The Vulgate still further takes out *upon*, and says that Jacob worshiped the top of his staff. The learned Dean says it was Jacob's own staff upon which he leaned. Dr. Taylor says it was Joseph's staff. Professor Thayer says that Jacob did not worship at all, but simply paid homage to Joseph after the Egyptian fashion, as a high officer of state. *Every* word the word of God? Whose—Thayer's or Alford's, the Vulgate or the Septuagint, Genesis or Hebrews?

Is not this staff of Israel a very, very bruised reed to lean on? If Professor Phelps's principle is the true one, that the Bible is a solid, a unit, every word the Word of God, and that we cannot throw away one part without throwing away all, then we must give up the Bible with its legacy of love, and truth, and comfort, and hope, with all its sacredness of generations, because the vowel points were not invented in season for the Septuagint translators to know whether the word was *hamittah*—bed, or *hamatteh*—staff; because M. Chabas was not born soon enough to tell King James's translators that bowing one's self on the Superior's staff of office was an ordinary Egyptian mode of recognizing the Superior's authority. Must we, in spite of modern reverent research, still cling to the head of Jacob's bed, or sink in the troublous ocean of life, unbuoyed, unsustained by the wonderful Word of God?

But in any other theory Professor Phelps finds absurdity. "That He has given to a lost world a book inspired here and not inspired there, historic now and mythic then, blundering sometimes and by hap right at other times, and that he has left it to man's infirm intuitions to divine whether it is oracular anywhere, is absurd. It is not like God to build such a rickety structure."

I am in despair at my own temerity, but to me it seems exactly like God. What can be a more rickety structure than this world which He has made? Doubtless to its Creator's eye it goes on its stately course undisturbed in eternal order, but to us who live in it, what ricketiness! It is shaken by earthquakes, it is pierced by lightnings, it is swept by cyclones. The sea plucks at the

land. The land slips under the sea. The rivers ravage the meadows. Vineyards are overwhelmed by volcanoes. Man is born upon the earth and he cannot emigrate to another planet. He is fastened to this, yet here he is preyed upon by fire and water, and bug and beast. And what a rickety structure is man himself—complicate and wonderful in design, but so imperfectly completed, so ill-adapted to his surroundings, that multitudes perish before the journey of life is fairly begun, and multitudes more sink by the wayside from pain and weariness. Of all the millions born, so rickety is the world-construction that the number is infinitesimal who pass, without pain or trouble, through well-rounded days to the full complement of their years, and enter Heaven gently, from glory to glory. It is such a rickety world, such a piece of damaged goods, a machine so out of gearing, that Professor Phelps himself is fain to call it “a lost world,” and all theology of all ages agrees in calling it “a hurt world.” If the structure of inspiration given by God is to correspond to the structure of the world made by God, it must have one pervading and prevailing principle of life, a continuous and upward line of movement; but it must be very rickety in that part of its construction which comes within human experience.

What Professor Phelps declares absurd is exactly what has been given us—a book inspired here and not inspired there. “I command,” says Paul; “not I, but the Lord.” And soon after he adds, “the rest speak I, not the Lord”—a specific declaration that his word is inspired here and not inspired there. “Historic now and mythic then.” Certainly. David was undoubtedly the historic king in Jerusalem. The tempter of Eve was as undoubtedly a mythic snake. So the Bible itself tells us hundreds of years afterwards, for the serpent which coils itself into the first book as a beast of the field is cast out of the last as Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. “Blundering sometimes, and by hap right at other times.” Yes, Peter was right when he pronounced, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” and he received the solemn confirmation, “Upon this rock will I build my church.” But he blundered straightway in contradicting Jesus, and was instantly and unflinchingly suppressed. “Get thee behind me, Satan. . . . Thou art an offense unto me.”

What is meant by “infallibility?” What is meant by “authority?” What is meant by “inspiration?” Is not a stress often

laid upon the words which is wholly unwarranted? Suppose we admit—leaving aside all questions of text and translation—that the whole Bible, as a unit, is inspired and infallible; do we mean that Abraham was directed by God to offer up his son Isaac, or that Moses was directed by God to tell the story? Suppose both, what of it? Suppose the book of Genesis to be infallible, what of it? To whom does it give authority to do what? A man who should attempt to sacrifice his son to-day would be arrested. A man who did sacrifice his daughter was shut up in a lunatic asylum. Since the Chicago bomb, a man who should preach the duty of sacrificing children would probably share the same fate. Suppose the book of Exodus to be inspired, infallible, and authoritative in every part and parcel, what of it? Assuming that God did direct the Jewish master to bring his faithful servant to the door-post, and bore his ear through with an awl, no American master is going to do so. To a bad servant he would sometimes like to do it, but the law would not allow it. The servant would not permit it. Suppose Matthew was divinely inspired to narrate the story of the tribute-money found in the fish, we are not ordered to pay our taxes by such recourse. There is hardly a word in the Old Testament, there are not many words in the New Testament, directly addressed to us. Most of both is narrative, directions, sermons, songs, remonstrances, arguments, all with a strong personal bearing upon men who have been dead for generations. The stress of these instructions has quietly lapsed with the lapse of time, with the change of institutions. Whether God told the Scriptures writers in so many words what to say, or whether their inspiration was the inspiration of genius, enthusiasm, love to God, love to man, just the same have we all—Professor Phelps and Professor Park, Andover, and Bangor, and Princeton—taken liberties with it, taken leave to say what part we would accept and what part we would reject, what part we would practice, and what part we would discard. God said: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, but Professor Phelps practically says: not so, Lord, I will remember the Sunday to keep it holy. God says the garments which the priests shall wear are a breastplate, and ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, and a mitre, and a girdle, but Professor Phelps prefers a plain frock-coat and trousers when he addresses us upon the necessity of having a theory of inspiration “*which makes the authority of the Scriptures imperative!*”

Inculcating the necessity of the literal verbal plenary inspiration of the Bible, Professor Phelps makes merry—gently—over Starr King's attempted explanation of inspiration, "it is—hm—it is a kind of mental uplifting; it is an illumination; it is—well, it is an *inspiration* of the whole man." We must have something better than this, protests the Professor. "We must have the doctrine in a bold and decisive form," which "plain men" can *use*. And for Mr. King's glittering and sounding generalities he substitutes something which must "make the Bible resonant with the very voice of God. It must be something which the soul can hear in the far distance, when conscious of estrangement from its Maker. It must give visions of truth which men can see in the dark." This is lofty and admirable. I think it is also true. My theory of inspiration does all that. But it seems to leave as much to the imagination as did Starr King's definition. A theory that gives visions of truth which men can see in the dark is certainly and markedly a theory of "illumination." "Plain men" will find no more difficulty in grasping the theory of a "mental uplifting" than a theory "which the soul can hear in the far distance."

But, says Professor Phelps, "a theory of inspiration, of which the final outcome is that Moses contradicted Christ, that the imprecations of David conflict with the epistles of John, and that St. Paul could not even repeat himself correctly, abrogates all claim of the Scriptures to imperative and divine authority. God has not thus contradicted God."

Oh, for words to express in the highest style of theological discussion the imperious conviction that this beloved disciple has certainly got the cart before the horse! He is so great, and so good, and so venerable that he shall drive in that fashion if he chooses, for whichever way he drives he is always heading towards Heaven; but it behooves the commonalty to harness in regular order. No theory causes the contradictions. The contradictions are there. What we want is a theory that shall take them in without throwing the Bible away. God has not thus contradicted God, therefore there are no contradictions, says the old theory. God has not contradicted God, therefore the contradictions are not of God, says the new theory. One might as well deny day and night as deny the contradictions. "Thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation," says the Lord through Moses,

"and thou shalt kill the bullock before the Lord, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar . . . it is a sin offering." Speaking through Isaiah, God says, with every mark of disgust, "I delight not in the blood of bullocks. Who hath required this at your hand? Bring no more vain oblations!"

"He shall burn a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations," says God in Exodus. "Incense is an abomination unto Me," says God in Isaiah.

The service of the Lord in the Chronicles required the Levites to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the Lord in the Sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, continually before the Lord. But in Isaiah the Lord said: The new moons and Sabbaths I cannot away with! Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth.

"Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?" asked the Pharisees, tempting Christ.

"What did Moses command you?" he replied, warily.

"Moses suffered to put her away," they said.

"For the hardness of your heart," answered Jesus, "he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Can contradiction be sharper? Does not our Lord apparently summon Moses for the very purpose of contradicting him? Is it any theory about inspiration that makes these contradictions? Is there any theory in earth or Heaven that can make them anything but contradictions? Must we throw away the Bible because Moses and Isaiah contradict each other, or throw away our own reason by asserting that they do not contradict each other? Never! Neither! But with the golden thread of truth and righteousness running unbroken through both, and by aid of these very contradictions showing the development of human reason under the cherishing light of the Divine Reason, let us weave a theory of inspiration which shall fit the facts of earth, and to that extent at least must be the inspiration of Heaven.

But such a theory, says theology, would give us a volume which it is not "like man to interpret truthfully. The uncult-

tured mind especially cannot solve the riddle of such a book." But even on the rigidest old solid unit theory, the Bible has not been truthfully interpreted. The uncultured mind and the cultured mind have alike failed to solve its riddles. It was because they looked upon the Bible as a unit, solid, inelastic, without perspective, inspired everywhere alike, never contradicting itself, oracular everywhere, that men hung the witches. Slavery in the Southern States planted itself flat-footed on the law of Moses and stood there. Polygamy transplants the institutions of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in modern Christendom, and breathes out threatenings and slaughter against the Spirit of Christ. There is hardly an evil institution, hardly an evil deed under the sun, which the Bible does not buttress, if the Bible is to be taken at the foot of the letter, solid square to scientific truth, like the multiplication table.

Any other than the mechanical theory of "an obvious authority, an imperial authority, an authority from which there is no appeal," is spoken of as a new theory, "a new departure." But there is nothing new about it. It is the oldest theory there is. It is as old as the Bible itself. The Bible theory of inspiration is not of an external authority, but of inward influence, inbreathing. Man makes things by external measurement and means. God makes by inward growth. Man battered away at poor old Charleston for four years and only displaced a few stones. The mighty earth-force touched her for one quivering moment and left destruction. Man makes a house noisily with saw and hammer. Silently God makes a tree. Man governs by Courts and Congresses. God writes his law unseen, upon the unseen heart. In human work man is always at the fore. He alone is God who hideth himself.

Professor Phelps cannot think it possible that God has left it to man's infirm intuitions to divine whether the Bible is oracular anywhere. But that is just what He has done apparently, and apparently it is oracular nowhere. We are ever clamoring that God should be oracular, and he never is. Sometimes we try to make the Bible oracular by opening it at random and putting a blind finger on a verse. But this, also, is vanity. God is inexorable. He will not say to us yea or nay. All the authority of Scripture serves simply to give each man a warrant for his own convictions, a reason for the hope that is in him. He can intrench himself in error behind the breastwork of the Bible just as

strongly to his own convictions as he can intrench himself in the truth. The light of Revelation may shine in darkness, and the darkness comprehend it not. We have the Revelation of Jesus the Christ. We have the Revelation of the earth and the Heavens ; and we have within us that vital spark of Heavenly flame, Reason, which must be to each man his judge of all Revelation. This reason we shrink from using. We are ever sinking down into the animal nature up from which we sprung, out from which we are bidden forth, and asking to be controlled, asking for an outside, tangible authority, for an "obvious authority, an imperial authority, an authority from which there is no appeal." But God has made us free agents and He requires that we control ourselves. He tells no one what to do, or think, or say, or believe ; but within every man, differentiating him from the beast, making him in the image of God, is a something by which he must say, and do, and think about all things for himself, both of this world and the next—the spirit of man and the law of God. All the way is strewn with blunders ; but so only is the right way learned. The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding, but not in any manner or to any extent that forbids the human understanding to be often at fault. Men make a thousand blunders even in their highest attempts at pure reasoning. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, but discharging no man from responsibility for his own belief. For a thousand years it has said to no man : Do this ! Believe that ! It is the deposit of ages of human experience under the unseen government of the universe. It marks the highest revelation of Deity to humanity. We trace in it the footsteps of the Creator from the first brooding darkness of our material universe to its culmination in the redemption of man through Jesus Christ, our Lord. All that is contradictory in it, all that is unmeaning, is but the inevitable limitation of the human minds through which it was conveyed, of the human minds by which it is to be apprehended. The Divine element in the Bible is so strong, so sane, so overpowering, that, through all the errors of all the ages, through the bickering of churchmen, the ignorance of scholars, the mistakes of translators, the prejudices of commentators, through the besetment of savage barbarism and barbarous intolerance, sweet, and pure, and clear, it shines, with a steady

and increasing light, justifying itself by its own radiance, slowly but surely softening the world with its warmth, transfusing ignorance with knowledge, penetrating manners with kindness, changing ferocity to gentleness, displacing selfishness by love; slowly, slowly, but surely, wresting—say, rather, releasing, redeeming, dissolving—this world from the dominion of the Beast, and bringing us into the Kingdom of our Lord, Christ, what we were originally created to be, the children of the Highest.

GAIL HAMILTON.